(b) whether the move will ensure that affected farmers get short-term crop loans at 7 per cent with a provision to make it even more attractive at 6 per cent to those with a healthy track record;

(c) if so, whether public sector banks also lend to farmers at low interest rates through NABARD Regional Rural Banks, etc.;

(d) whether Government has also considered allocation of Rs. 1.473 crores as non-plan grant to meet the losses; and

(e) if so, to what extent these proposals have been accepted and the steps being taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (e) There is no proposal to provide any separate interest subsidy to farmers hit by drought. However, Public Sector Banks (PSBs), Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are already providing short-term crop loans upto a principal amount of Rs.3 lakh to the farmers at 7% rate of interest. This rate is applicable for all farmers including those hit by drought.

Further, during the year 2009-10 an additional interest subvention @ 1% would be given to those prompt paying farmers who repay their short term crop loan within the period of interest subvention *i.e.* within one year of disbursement of such loans. Hence, the prompt paying farmers would get short term crop loans upto a principal amount of Rs.3 lakh @ 6% per annum during the year 2009-10.

Government is providing interest subvention of 2% per annum to Public Sector Banks (PSBs), Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) on their own funds used for providing short term crop loans upto a principal amount of Rs. 3 lakh per farmer @ 7% per annum. As per the interest subvention scheme, banks are reimbursed the eligible amount of interest subvention. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) are getting claims from PSBs, RRBs and Cooperative Banks on regular basis which is being reimbursed by them. Government releases necessary funds to RBI/NABARD so that the claims received from lending institutions may be reimbursed by them in time. The Government has approved the interest subvention scheme for the year 2009-10 with estimated cost of Rs.4,000.00 crore.

National Policy for farmers

3246. SHRI ISHWAR SINGH:

SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had announced National Policy for farmers in 2007;

(b) if so, the present status of the policy;

(c) whether any time-frame has been fixed for proper implementation of the policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF), the Government announced the National Policy for Farmers (NPF), 2007. An Inter-Ministerial Committee finalized a Plan of Action for operationalisation of the NPF, 2007 and the same was circulated in October, 2008 to all the State Governments particularly with respect to the items falling within the purview of State Governments and the central Ministries/Departments concerned, for necessary action. A regular monitoring mechanism has also been put in place to oversee the progress of implementation of NPF 2007.

Special agriculture zones

3247. SHRI ISHWAR SINGH:

SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that some State Governments have decided to set up Special Agriculture Zones (SAZs) on the lines of Special Economic Zones;

(b) if so, whether Central Government proposes to encourage the States who have set up such SAZs; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Pathetic condition of farmers

3248. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:

SHRIMATI KUSUM RAI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agricultural land available in India is 54 to 57 per cent of total land area while the world average is 10 to 11 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) whether it is a fact that Indian farmers are in a very pathetic and miserable condition;

(d) if so, the details of farmers who committed suicide during last one year, State-wise;

(e) whether farmers are committing suicide due to very less increase in MSP of agricultural products in comparison to other essential articles; and